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UNIT 6

THEORIES OF POLITENESS

1. Read the following example and explain in which way we say that the Principle of Politeness rescues the Cooperative Principle.

(Context: two boys are having a drink in a pub and a very ugly woman enters the pub).

A: That woman is the ugliest woman I have ever met, isn't she?

B: What time is it?

2. We have just seen in Exercise 1 that the Politeness Principle can supersede the Cooperative Principle. Now consider the following example:

a) Help! Save me, I am drowning!

b) Help! Would you mind saving me? I am drowning.

Answer the following questions:

- In example *a*), which principle is violated and which is observed?
- In example *b*), which principle is violated and which is observed?
- In this context, which of the two examples is the most appropriate?
- Do you think that the Cooperative Principle can also supersede the Politeness Principle?

3. In certain contexts, some utterances which at first sight are impolite may be polite. On the basis of this rationale, provide a context for each of the following utterances, which seem impolite, so that they are not impolite any more:

- Close your mouth!
- Shut up!
- Don't touch it!
- Don't be silly!

(translated from Reyes et al., 2000b: 103).

4. Rearrange the following sentences starting with the least polite. Analyze these sentences in terms of the following scales: cost-benefit, optionality, indirectness, authority, and social distance. Provide a context in which each of the following sentences is more appropriate taking into account the addressee and the context.

- a) Can you close the window?
- b) Close the window.
- c) I was wondering if you could possibly close the window.
- d) Could you close the window?

5. Offer a similar example to the one provided in Exercise 4 and analyze it in terms of the same scales: cost-benefit, optionality, indirectness, authority, and social distance. Try to use different linguistic devices from the ones used in the previous exercise.

6. What is defined in the following quotation? Fill in the blank with the appropriate word and define it in your own words.

... the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact. _____ is an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes –albeit an image that others may share, as when a person makes a good showing for his profession or religion by making a good showing for himself (Goffman, 1967: 5).

7. Identify the maxim of the Principle of Politeness which is violated in the following cases:

- I did the best job, didn't I?
- I'm very sorry that your mother has died.
- You have to give me half the money you won.
- Are these stupid children yours?
- Would you mind answering the phone?
- That's not right, he was the best candidate.
- I am very glad you were sent to prison.

8. Consider the following situation: a department has just bought a new photocopier. It works brilliantly but it takes some time to know how it works. One of the employees thinks that it is appropriate and polite to make reference to the new machine when he meets his boss. The employee realizes that his boss is using the photocopier and approaches him. In this context the following dialogue takes place (example taken from Grundy, 1995: 131):

Employee: It's brilliant this machine, isn't it?

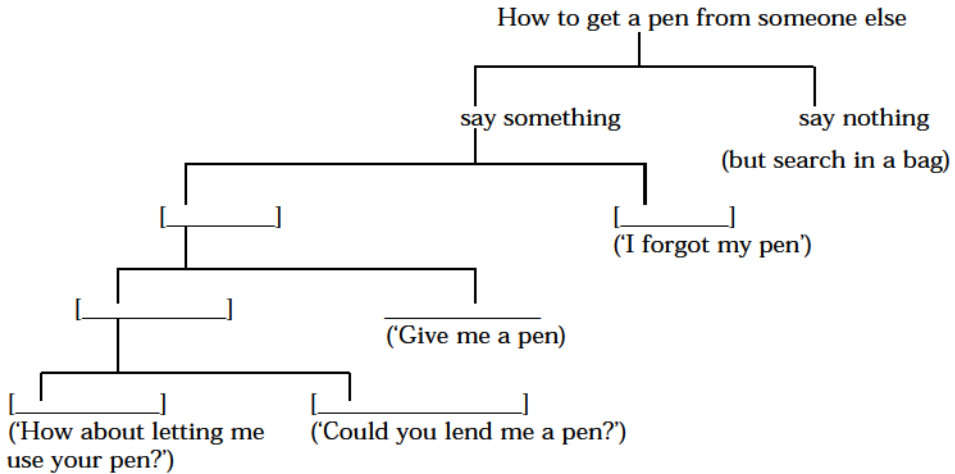
Boss: Yes, it has a mind of its own.

Employee: That's also true.

Answer the following questions:

- Why does the employee use the question tag *isn't it*?
- Do you think that the boss's answer is relevant? What does the boss want to express by means of his answer? Does the boss really mean the photocopier is brilliant?
- In terms of which maxim of the Politeness Principle can the sentence *That's also true* be interpreted?

9. Complete the following figure taken from Yule (1996: 66):



How to get a pen from someone else (following Brown and Levinson, 1987)

10. Are the following cases examples of positive or negative politeness? Insert each example into the corresponding category in the table below.

- Be pessimistic

- Minimize imposition
- Joke
- Be optimistic
- Be conventionally indirect
- Presuppose/assert common ground
- Exaggerate interest/approval
- Question, hedge
- Intensify interest
- Offer, promise

POSITIVE POLITENESS	NEGATIVE POLITENESS
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	
6.	

11. Discuss 'politeness' from the point of view of pragmatics.
12. Explain the difference between 'politeness' and 'deference'.
13. Discuss the concepts of 'register' and 'politeness'.
14. When is politeness an utterance level phenomenon? Discuss.
15. Who introduced the Politeness Principle? Define and discuss it.
16. The 'face-saving' view of politeness.
17. Negative and positive face.

18. Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies.
19. Face-threatening acts (FTAs).
20. Leech's politeness (interpersonal) maxims. Define, discuss and give examples.
21. Leech's *Pollyanna Principle*.
22. Criticisms of Leech's approach to politeness.
23. Have a look at the following figure reflecting Brown and Levinson's classification of FTAs (Spanish version):

	IMAGEN NEGATIVA			IMAGEN POSITIVA	
	Una acción futura se impone de algún modo	Una acción futura positiva se impone de algún modo	Deseo hacia los bienes del destinatario	El emisor tiene una evaluación negativa del destinatario	El emisor no se preocupa por el destinatario
Amenaza para el destinatario	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Órdenes, peticiones - Sugerencias, consejos - Avisos y amenazas - Advertencias y actos de osadía 	Ofrecimientos y promesas	Cumplidos y expresiones de fuertes emociones negativas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expresiones de desaprobación, - Críticas, desprecio o ridículo - Quejas y reprimendas - Acusaciones, insultos, contradicciones y desacuerdos - Retos 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expresiones de emociones violentas - Irreverencia - Traer malas noticias para el destinatario - Sacar temas emocionalmente peligrosos - No cooperar en alguna actividad - Usar fórmulas de tratamiento y otras marcas de identificación de estatus
Amenaza para el emisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expresar agradecimiento - Aceptar el agradecimiento del destinatario y sus disculpas - Excusas - Aceptación de ofrecimientos - Respuestas a los propios fallos - Promesas y ofrecimientos falsos 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Disculpas - Aceptación de un cumplido - Colapso del control físico del cuerpo - La propia humillación, el actuar de manera tonta - Confesiones, admisiones de culpa o responsabilidad - Escapes emocionales: no controlar la risa o el llanto. 	